



SUNSHINE STORIES.

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By H. C. Andersen.

“Now I am going to tell a story,” said the wind.

“No; with your permission,” said the rain, “it is my turn now. You have been standing at the corner of the street, howling with all your might and main quite long enough.”

“Is that all the thanks I get,” said the wind, “after having turned so many umbrellas inside out in your honour; yes, snapped them in two when people wanted to keep you at a distance?”

“I will tell a story,” said the sunshine, suddenly beaming: “Silence!” And it was said with so much majesty, that the wind laid himself down at his full length; but the rain drizzled in the wind and said: “And we must endure it! She is always breaking in, this Madam Sunshine. But we won’t listen. It is not worth our while to listen.”

And the sunshine began as follows:—

“There was once a swan who flew out over the rolling sea; every feather on his body shone like gold. One feather fell down upon a great merchant-ship that was gliding along beneath under full sail: the feather fell upon the curly hair of the young man who had to look after the freight—the supercargo, they called him. This feather of the Bird of Good Fortune touched his forehead, and turned to a pen in his hand; and he soon became a rich merchant, able to buy him spurs of gold, and transform his golden platters to a nobleman’s scutcheon. I have shone full upon it,” said the sunshine.

“On flew the swan over a green meadow, where the little shepherd-boy, a child of seven years, had laid himself down under the shade of the solitary old tree out there. And the swan in his flight kissed one of the leaves of the tree, and it fell down into the boy’s hand; and the one leaf grew to three, then to ten, then to a whole book; and he read in it all about the wonders of nature, about his mother-tongue, about faith and knowledge.

“At bed-time he laid the book under his pillow that he might not forget what he had read; and the book bore him on to the school-

bench, on and on to the Professor's chair. I have read his name among those of the learned," said the sunshine.

" Away flew the swan into the deep forest solitudes, and rested himself there upon the still dark lakes, where the water-lily grows, where the wild wood-apples grow, where the cuckoo and the wood-dove have their homes.

" A poor woman was gathering fuel—fallen branches; she bore them upon her back, and carried her little child at her breast, and was now on her way home. She saw the golden swan, the Swan of Good Fortune, spring up from the rushy banks. What was that gleaming there? A golden egg: it was still warm. She laid it in her bosom, and the warmth remained; there was certainly life in the egg. Yes, there was a pecking inside the shell; she heard it, and thought it was her own heart that was beating.

" At home in her poor chamber she took out the golden egg. 'Tick tick,' it said, as if it was a costly gold watch; but it was an egg with quick life within. The egg split, a little cygnet covered with feathers like pure gold put out its head; it had round its neck four sparkling rings, and as the poor woman had just four boys, three at home, and the fourth the one she had carried with her into the forest solitudes, she understood at once that here was a ring for each of the children; and as soon as she understood it, the little golden bird flew away.

" She kissed all the rings in turn, and let every child kiss one of the rings: then she laid the ring he had kissed upon each child's heart, and at last placed it upon his finger. I saw it," said the sunshine; " and I saw what followed.

" The first boy set himself down in the clay-pit, took a lump of clay in his hand, turned it about with his fingers, and it grew into a figure of Jason, who had fetched the golden fleece.*

" The second of the boys ran straight out into the meadow, where the flowers were growing of all imaginable colours. He plucked a handful, grasped them so tight that the flower-juices spurted into his eyes, and wetted his ring; there was a yearning in his thoughts, and a yearning in his hand; and after many days all the great town was talking about the great painter.

" The third of the boys held the ring so fast in his mouth that

* It was a plaster cast for a statue of Jason that first brought fame to the great Danish sculptor, Thorwaldsen.

sounds issued from it, echoes from the bottom of his heart; feelings and thoughts rose up in musical tones, soaring on high like singing swans, and diving down, like swans, into the deep sea, the deep, deep sea of thought. He grew to be a master of musical tones. Every land may now think, 'He belongs to me!'

"The fourth little fellow—why, he *was* a shrivelled atom! He had the pip, they said, he must have pepper and butter, like the sick chickens. And they said the words with a peculiar accent of their own, 'Pepper-r-r and butter-r-r.' And that is what they gave him. But I gave him sunbeam-kisses," said the sunshine. "I gave ten kisses to his one. His was a poet-nature; he was both thumped and kissed. But he had the ring of Good Fortune, from the golden swan of Good Fortune. His thoughts flew out like singing butterflies, the symbol of immortality."

"It was a long story, that," said the wind.

"And tiring," said the rain. "Blow on me, that I may come to myself again."

And the wind blew, and the sunshine went on with her stories.

"The Swan of Good Fortune now flew away over a deep bay, where the fishermen had spread their nets. The poorest of them was thinking of marrying, and he did marry.

"The swan brought to him and his wife a piece of amber. Amber attracts,—and this attracted human hearts to their house. Amber is the most delightful incense,—and a fragrance rose around them there like that in church, a fragrance from God's sweet Nature. They had a deep feeling of domestic happiness, and enjoyed real Good Fortune; they were contented in their lowly lot, and so their life became one whole Sunshine Story."

"Shall we leave off now?" said the wind. "The sunshine has been telling stories quite long enough. I am tired."

"I too," said the rain.

And what, my friends, shall we who have heard the stories say? We will say, "Now they are all over."

as she gazes at you she seems like Pygmalion's statue waking into life."

At that moment Kirstin was kneeling in front of the fire, busied in preparing supper. In the interval between some of her culinary operations she had fixed her eyes upon Mrs. Ramsey, with a look of intense admiration, but upon seeing she had attracted the lady's notice she coloured and turned away her face.

Mrs. Ramsey also felt abashed, and turning to her husband said, "What can she mean by that look?"

"I think I can tell better than she could herself," he replied; "she has fallen in love with you, Esther. Luckily for my peace of mind it is not the handsome young fisherman, but the old fisherman's commonplace daughter, who has fallen under the spell of Queen Esther."

(To be continued.)

THE DISCONTENTED DONKEY.

A FABLE FOUNDED ON FACT.

N a green and pleasant pasture, close to a parsonage house, and bordered on one side by umbrageous elms, and on the two others by the road and the parson's orchard, revelled at his ease an old shaggy ass.

He was an ass who had seen much of the world, and had experienced as many of the ups and downs of life, especially of the latter, as most of his species; for the fact was, that little else than hard words, hard blows, and hard work, together with scanty fare and the poorest lodging, had fallen to his lot. But great was the change in his fortunes when he was purchased to draw the old donkey-chair, in which the clergyman's wife, an invalid, used to take the air, and pay little visits of kindness to her neighbours, the poor villagers. At first, indeed, he could scarcely believe his senses when he found himself the sole occupier of the rich green paddock, and with so little to do too! for the chair was light, and the poor lady never went far, nor out of a walk, and that only in fine weather, and when she felt able, so that it may well be supposed that Master Ned thought himself "a very lucky fellow." And proud and happy he felt when drawing his kind mistress in the old chair, with her pretty daughter Eleanor merrily walking and chatting by his side. Not but that it must be owned the old ass, with his

shaggy coat, and the old battered chair, though in admirable harmony with one another, formed together an "equipage" (so to speak) anything but elegant or fashionable.

And thus passed days, weeks, months, and upwards of a year. But, as there is said to be a dark closet in every house, so in every state, a grievance, real or imaginary, is apt, sooner or later, to present itself, especially to a perverse or unoccupied mind. And thus it fell out that Ned, who had so little to do, had the more time for thought; but being intended by Nature for a worker rather than a thinker, he displayed much less skill in the use he now made of his brains, than in that he made of his sinews in times past. Moreover, he began to wax fat and headstrong from good living, and from the same cause began to grow more lazy, or at least, unwilling to work; and laziness and self-conceit (as such things will do in beings of capacities superior to those of old Ned) began to lead his mind into trains of thought and views of life somewhat at variance with sound logic or right feeling.

Now it happened that Ned, who was very wise in his way—that is, the way of an ass—had observed in his former traffic among men, that when any one met with a piece of good fortune, or "good luck," as it was more commonly called, he invariably attributed the same to some sort of cleverness, forethought, or talent of his own, or at least deemed it a kind of homage paid by fortune to his superior merit of one kind or another; but that, on the contrary, when any one got into any scrape or difficulty, he invariably laid the blame on "bad luck," or on the faults of others, on anything, indeed, rather than on his own vices, follies, or mismanagement.

Embued with these fine notions Ned began to think within himself that, as his was no common lot, surely his merit was of no common kind, and that, therefore, all the good things that had fallen in his way had come there by a kind of natural law, and were his by prescriptive right. And if any one thinks he reasoned "like an ass," let me assure every such individual that this is nothing but what is done every day by many a one who, forgetful of the Providence which has bestowed upon him happiness or success in life, looks round upon his fellows in lofty self-complacency, and accepts the good he enjoys almost as his due.

Having attained this state of feeling, and being puffed up with a mighty idea of his own importance, Ned began to think it "hard" that

he had no "companion;" he meant, no one to admire or praise him; "for what," thought he, "can be the use of superior merit if there be no inferiors to acknowledge and reverence it?" 'Tis true, there were the two dogs, Snap and Shuffle; but somehow, though they were all very friendly together, when Ned was drawing the chair and Eleanor was walking by his side, there seemed but little sympathy between them, for the two dogs always appeared—socially speaking, of course—to "look down" systematically on their fellow-quadruped; and even, so he thought, to turn up their dogs' noses in contempt of him. Then where they lived, or what they did for a livelihood, Ned could never imagine, though he puzzled over it a long time; but one thing was clear, namely, that Snap and Shuffle wore no harness as he did, and had nothing to pull or carry, and seemed, indeed, to have nothing to do but to run, frisking, jumping, and barking about, while their mistresses seemed never weary of caressing them.

Will it be believed that envy, together with discontent, was beginning to find its way into Ned's heart? Yes; so it was.

"Who and what were Snap and Shuffle, that they should have so easy and merry a life of it, while he was all day long either at work or alone in the green field? True, he had all he needed, but then what a superior sort of existence seemed to be theirs!" And so, instead of feeling grateful for the good things fortune had bestowed upon him, he began to yearn after something, he knew not what, that seemed to belong to another.

And thus it was, that finding himself without a companion of his own sort, he formed a speaking acquaintance with an old magpie, who frequented the elm-trees that skirted the paddock. At first it was but a slight interchange of civilities, as she hopped about the field looking for worms; but as the weight on his mind grew heavier the more he pondered over his "wrongs," he began to talk more freely, in order to relieve the burden of his thoughts.

Now the magpie was one of those busybodies who, for the sake of being listened to, are always ready with their advice, but who, as they have no fixed principles and no real regard for their neighbour, and as they are, moreover, shallow-pated and vulgar, generally contrive to advise what is either mischievous or impracticable; flattering or contradicting those who consult them, rather according to the caprice of the moment than the merits of the case.

To her, therefore, in a short time he confided the state of his mind, while she condoled with him, entering into all his views, and doing her best (or worst) to make the ungrateful ass still more discontented.

One fine morning, as the weather seemed set in warm and pleasant, the old gardener, who "minded" the donkey, thinking to give his mistress an agreeable surprise, took Ned to the stable, and clipped and currycombed his shaggy hide. At first the task seemed hopeless; but after a great deal of patience and painstaking, the gardener had every reason to be pleased with the result. Wonderful indeed was the change when, in place of the rough bear-like coat he had formerly worn, Ned issued forth from the stable in a neat and well-fitting suit of dark "pepper-and-salt," while his limbs, freed from their superfluous hair, seemed to have acquired a grace and symmetry they had never known before.

A few days after, the invalid lady ordered out the donkey-chair; and great indeed was her surprise and delight, and that of Eleanor, at sight of the improvement that had been wrought in old Ned. Even Ned himself, feeling lighter and friskier than he had felt since the days of his foalship, stepped along with unwonted vigour and consequence, and almost forgot, for the time, that he had a grievance in the world.

On their return home, they were met by the clergyman himself, who was so much pleased with Ned's improved appearance and jaunty air, that he said to his wife—"I think, my dear, that as Ned is turning out so well and is so steady, we will have him measured for a new set of harness, to fit nicely; and, to tell you a little secret, I have just been looking at a new and very neat donkey-chair, that I think will just suit you."

"Many thanks, my dear, for your kind present and kind thought," said the lady. "I shall be delighted to have a new chair, for this, if the truth be told, at times shakes me terribly;" then, turning to Eleanor, she continued, "And when your aunt comes, how glad she will be to have a nice chair to take her out to tea."

"Yes," said Eleanor; "and the children! won't they be pleased with the old donkey! I say, Neddy, why you're quite a smart young fellow again."

If Ned were self-conceited before, on a mere abstract view of his own merit, what, one may imagine, did he not think of himself now?

For a few days after this the poor lady was confined to the house, and the new carriage and the new harness were for the present forgotten.

The next time Ned saw his confidant, the magpie, he gave himself so many airs, that she thought he was not going to speak to her.

"Why, how now? what's this?" she cried. "What's in the wind now? Oh, I perceive, a new suit! So, you've been moulting! Why how quick you have been about it!"

"Yes, madam," replied Ned, with a slight lisp (trying to do the elegant); "I am really in hopes that justice will be done me at last."

He then related all he had heard about the new harness, the new carriage, the aunt, and the children.

When he had finished, the lady, after a few moments' consideration, replied, in a somewhat scornful tone—

"Why roast me," she cried (I am rather afraid she meant this for swearing), "if I don't believe that you know no more the true sense of what you have heard from those two-pronged creatures than the chick unhatched knows the meaning of the fox's bark."

"You don't say so!" says Ned, in considerable alarm; "why what is there to object to in what I have told you?"

"Object to!" she answered; "why everything to object to. Why, can't you see the dodge?"

"Dodge," said Ned (making believe to ignore the ungenteel expression), "what's that?"

"Come, you know well enough," said she; "and don't you know that the harness you wear is enough for the carriage you have to draw? and don't you know that the chair you draw is enough for your dignity and comfort, if not for your strength? Well then, what can a new harness mean but new chains, more firmly riveted, to compel you to more severe labour? And what can a new chair be got for, if not to hold a greater load, and so put upon you more than you can bear?"

"And then you mentioned an aunt and children. Well, I've had some experience of aunts; and though I've heard they have been civil enough to certain friends of mine who have been caught and kept in cages, yet they're fat unwieldy creatures after all."

"What!" interrupted Ned, "are all aunts fat?"

"Yes," said the magpie; "some of the fattest women I know are aunts. All aunts are fat, except the thin ones, and they are always

spiteful and stingy. And then there are children. I should think you have no need to be told what children are. Ask yourself then what this new 'badge of slavery' is to be like. *New harness?*—*new chains*, say I, *strong* and *new*. *A new chair?*—more likely a *waggon* that will hold your present mistress, Eleanor, the great fat aunt, and, who knows, perhaps, a dozen children, who will of course make it their business and delight to torment you all day long with whips, sticks, pins, and maddening noises. That's what you have to expect, with your fine folks and their fine promises. Oh, I wish you joy of your good fortune."

"But what am I to do?" said Ned, quite crestfallen. "I see it all now. How dull I must have been not to have known this at first! But tell me honestly, what would *you do* in my place?"

"Well," said the magpie, "I'll tell you what I'd do; I'd rise slowly, thus, on my hoppers; next, I would elongate and spread my wings to their utmost extent; then, scornfully bidding adieu to chains and tyrant, dogs, whips, guns, and harness, I would rise superior to all, and take flight to a more congenial situation. That's what *I'd do*."

"But," said Ned, "that's just what I can't do. There is a vital objection."

"What's your objection?" said the lady.

"Why, you see," said Ned, "that I cannot elongate my wings, and fly away as you describe, because—don't you understand?—I've no wings to elongate or fly away on; that makes all the difference, don't you see?"

"Why, yes," says the magpie, scratching her poll with the left claw, as if in thought, "that makes a difference, certainly; but then if you haven't wings, as I have, you have what I have not, hind-legs."

"Hind-legs?" said Ned, in astonishment (and forgetting the point in question), "have you no hind-legs? Are not your legs hind-legs?"

"Certainly not," said she; "how can there be hind-legs where there are no fore-legs? That's logic, isn't it?"

"Are you sure, madam," said Ned, whose perceptions were much clearer where his own vanity was not concerned, "are you sure that your argument does not 'prove too much?' For, if there can be no hind-legs where there are no fore-legs, surely there can be no fore-legs where there are no hind-legs. So your logic would leave you without a leg to stand on."

"That's just it," said the magpie; "we've had no legs to stand on since

the controversy began, for what we stand on are not *legs* but *hoppers*. I grant the term is new, but it is now universally adopted by the scientific amongst us, after centuries of disputation."

"And what then is the difference," said Ned, "between *legs* and *hoppers*?"

"Why," said she, "our philosophers define *legs* to be those trunk-like limbs by means of which so many creatures stand, walk, run, or kick; but *hoppers* they define as those light and elegant locomotive appendages on which, as on animated twigs of some waving tree, the graceful movement of hopping is performed—a form of motion peculiar to the nobler species of beings."

"But," said Ned (becoming argumentative on the strength of his fine coat), "I am sure I have seen certain men and boys hopping on their legs."

"Prongs!" screamed the magpie, correcting him. Ned went on, "And I know *you* can *run* on your *hoppers*. So then if one can *run* on *hoppers*, and *hop* on *legs* (or *prongs*), how does your definition of the two hold good?"

"Sir," said the magpie, with a sententious air, "there are mysteries in all sciences, beyond which the eye of bird or donkey may never penetrate. Let us drop the subject, if you please."

"With all my heart, my dear madam," said Ned; "drop what you will, I am content so long as I *fall upon my legs at last*. But you have not yet given me your advice in my distressing dilemma; what, after all, am I to do?"

"True," said the magpie; "I had forgotten. Well then, let me think."

"Ah!" she exclaimed, after a short pause, during which she had refreshed herself by picking up a few grubs. "As I was saying, since you have no wings, like a bird, use your legs, especially your hind-legs, like the ass you are. And for what purpose, indeed, have hind-legs been from time immemorial endued with the power of striking backwards, if not to assert and defend oneself? Watch then your opportunity, and use your limbs in such a manner as to show both friends and foes that you are not to be 'put upon' with impunity. Yes, let them see what you can be up to, let them know WHO YOU ARE. Assert the dignity of your race—for so many centuries maltreated and ill-appreciated—and let your cry be 'Justice to asses, and kicks and compound

fractures to their enemies, confusion to chain-makers, and death to all scarecrows."

"Madam," replied Ned, borne along, as it were, by this current of rhetoric, "how shall I ever be able to repay you for your kindness, your sympathy, and the refreshing advice you have given me? Words, indeed, fail me to express my profound admiration of your exalted talent, your incomparable wisdom, and your unrivalled eloquence. Henceforth I shall say to myself, when grazing on the highways or bye-paths of life, it is in vain to look further, I have found the very *thistle of perfection*."

The force of this metaphor, it must be remarked, lay in Ned's special appreciation of the plant named, which had ever appeared to his rustic palate the most "piquant" morsel he had ever tasted in his life.

"Oh, don't mention it," said the magpie, with a languishing air.

"And if," continued Ned, "I could in any way oblige you——"

"Yes, you can," said she, "that is, if you do not object to inform me; but it is perhaps a delicate subject; however, reports have reached me—and one cannot shut one's ears to the remarks folks make (not that I am given to gossip, for that's a thing I hate), so that, in short, I should be glad to ascertain the fact."

"Oh, anything, ma'am, that I can inform you of, I shall be delighted to oblige you."

"Well then," said she, with a mincing voice, "is it true, as I have heard it asserted, that when you gentlemen give utterance to your sentiments in the impressive manner men call braying, you are obliged by some occult law of nature to uplift your tails till nearly on a level with your spine; so that, as it is said, if a large stone be fastened to the end of your tail, you are absolutely incapacitated from announcing your sensations or intentions to the world?"

"My dear madam," replied Ned, dexterously evading the question, "surely a lady of your discernment and liberality of thinking knows how to despise as they deserve the ignorance and calumnies of the vulgar? Braying, ma'am, with us, besides being the mode of expressing our emotions assigned us by Nature, is also with us the highest act of self-assertion, an act by which the individual announces his conviction of his right to the largest extent of space on earth or in air that he can possibly occupy—which I take to be, philosophically and metaphorically speaking, the essence of self-assertion in all cases. So

that when you are intending to bray, you first plant your fore-legs firmly on the ground and close together, your hoofs slightly projecting forwards ; you next plant your hind-legs "(here—I am sorry to relate so unladylike an action—the magpie winked her right eye) "firmly in the same manner, with a slight incline outwards. And thus standing like an ancient Egyptian building—the primeval type of stability—you extend your jaw till nearly on a line with your backbone ; you then slowly and majestically elevate your tufted tail to a position horizontal with your spine, and finally breathe forth that utterance at once so grand, so terrible, and so melodious, that the lion himself (as ancient authors say), the king of forest and wild, flies wonder-stricken from those awe-inspiring sounds!"

Here Ned, following up his description, proceeded to give a specimen of the power of his oratory, so thrilling, indeed, and so terrific, that the magpie, who had never before heard an ass's bray so near, flew off with tingling ears to the top of a high tree, from whence, bidding Ned farewell for the present, she flew home to repose her nerves, and to relate every word she had heard to each of her neighbours ; while Ned, by no means dissatisfied with the "sensation" he had caused, continued his meal and his meditations. His mind was soon made up ; and he resolved, on the first opportunity, to put in practice the advice he had received.

And fortune seemed to favour his intent, as, a few days after, he was again put in the chair, and was driven out as usual with the sick lady, Eleanor, and the two dogs.

For some time they proceeded quietly along, Ned wishing to assure himself of a really good opportunity for showing off, and perhaps, also some little misgiving as to the propriety of his experiment might have crossed his mind. Indeed, he began to think he was letting the time slip by, when what should he see but his friend "Mag," who, flying down from a tree in the hedge, gave three hops just under his nose, and flew up again into the bough, from whence he heard her mocking voice crying, "Now's your time, Ned!" "Who's afraid?" "Go it, Neddy. Go it, Ned!" "Never say die!" "Think of the waggon load, and the great fat aunt, and the dozen children!" "Think of chains and slavery!" "Assert your dignity once for all, and show the world who you are!"

Urged on by these taunts, Neddy commenced kicking violently

against the chair, which, however, he could not strike, as it was not within his reach, a circumstance that only made him look the more ridiculous. He then put his head for a moment between his front legs, and set off at a hard gallop ; Eleanor running and calling on him to stop ; the chaise clattering and jolting ; the dogs barking with all their "steam on ;" the magpie screaming ; and the poor lady, though nearly shaken to convulsions, so alive to the absurdity of the scene, that she broke into a violent fit of laughter, which ended in hysterics.

And here we will take leave to remark, that in spite of the but too common contempt with which thoughtless persons (often as an excuse for cruelty) regard the race of donkeys, to "us" (the author, of course) there seems nothing despicable in the poor ill-used animal. But, on the contrary, so long as he patiently and faithfully toils on, fulfilling his humble duties in his humble sphere of life, there is something not only respectable, but even interesting ; and there *are* associations connected with him, more than with any other quadruped, that ought, more often than they do, to soften the heart of every Christian towards the poor enduring brute. Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that when an ass, at once silly and vicious, asserts himself, shows off his airs, or tries to "make a noise in the world," there is no creature living that makes such an arrant fool of himself. But, to continue.

On rushed Ned, kicking and caracolling, and trying to look as rakish as possible, in the most absurd manner, till at length, by way of climax, coming to a standstill at the gate of a farm-yard, he set up a resonant bray. (Whether he raised his tail or not, history does not say.) The farmer, who was busy in the yard, roused by the clamour, ran out with a grin on his face but a helping hand, and seizing the reins, put a full stop to Master Ned's erratic demonstrations.

The poor lady was lifted out of the chair, and accepting the farmer's invitation, sat down in the farm-house parlour, where she fainted. And so much was she excited by the jolting, laughing, noise, &c., of the adventure, that Eleanor absolutely refused to trust her mother again to so freakish a gentleman as Ned had shown himself. It was agreed, therefore, by all the party that Ned should be left behind with the farmer, who wanted an ass for rough work, and that a large and handsome donkey, which he had reared himself for a daughter who had lately married, should be lent on trial, in Ned's place ; which was accordingly done.

Now it so fell out, that while the fate of Ned was thus being decided in the parlour of the farm-house, "the hand of destiny," as romance writers say, was at work, bringing about another and equally unlooked-for catastrophe in the road, even that of Ned's mischievous adviser, "Mag."

It is an old saying, and a well-known truth, that those who take delight in doing mischief, or in leading their neighbours into it, very frequently become victims to their own plottings, or, as the Scripture says, are taken in the snares they had laid for another. And so it happened to the magpie, who, chattering and looking on with supreme delight at Ned and his achievements, did not perceive that a sharp-looking lad had an eye very suspiciously fixed upon her, who, the next minute, picking up a small stone, shied it at her with such good aim, that it struck her on the side of her poll, and she fell, stunned, to the ground. She was only stunned; but when she recovered her senses, what was her dismay at finding herself a captive in the folds of a great, red, cotton pocket-handkerchief! In vain she tried to make her escape, while she heard the boy, her captor, say to another—"Eh! but it's a nice 'un. I'll tak' it huom to our missis, and shu'll put it into t'old cage to please t' bairns."

Ay! it had come to this at last.

As to what eventually became of Mag, we have at present no reliable information; but the last of her speeches that we find on record was the following:—"There," said she, as she was being carried off, "this comes of trying to help one's neighbours. Well, I renounce philanthropy for ever!"

It remains only to say that Ned was sold to the farmer, and returned to his old life, or at least to something like it; while the new donkey, giving every satisfaction at the vicarage, being docile, grateful, and steady, trotting gaily with the youngsters, and walking demurely with the elders of the family, was finally purchased (as also the new chair), and became a first favourite. He is, to the best of our belief, alive and well at the present moment, and is particularly fond of bread and apples, of which he gets a good share, to say nothing of winning a prize at the last agricultural show.

AFTERPIECE AND MORALS.

Now I really believe that, without too closely imitating Master Tom in Aunt Judy's cat story, I might say with truth, that a thousand—or,

at any rate, a hundred—well, positively a score—at the very least, a dozen valuable (or invaluable) morals might be extracted from the foregoing history; but as Aunt Judy's space, as well as the patience of her readers, is but limited, I will content myself with making a selection of seven, which here follow:—

MORAL THE FIRST.

When you are well off and reasonably happy, be grateful for the good things you have, and don't grumble for what you have not, for the chances are that you have at least as much as you deserve.

MORAL THE SECOND.

Remember, whatever betide you, that neither success nor good fortune is always a test or reward of merit; although it sometimes happens that those whose merits do not rise with their fortunes live to find their fortunes descend to the level of their merits.

MORAL THE THIRD.

Beware of taking advice from chattering pies; that is, from persons ever ready to give an opinion, but who, from the nature of things, are quite incompetent to understand or advise you properly.

MORAL THE FOURTH.

Avoid hasty conclusions from the words or actions of others, especially when reported by chattering pies.

MORAL THE FIFTH.

When you've got a grievance (or think you have one), never try to set yourself *right* by doing *wrong*.

MORAL THE SIXTH.

And never try to "show your spirit" by kicks or cantankerous conduct, especially to your best friends.

MORAL THE SEVENTH.

Beware of self-conceit; and when you feel most desirous of showing the world (*i. e.*, the little world you live in) "who you are," be sure you don't prove yourself to be but an ass after all.

H. S. E.

CHRISTMAS CRACKERS.

A FANTASIA.

(Continued from p. 90.)

 T was a cracker like the preceding one that the grandmother and the parson pulled together. The old lady had insisted upon it. The good rector had shown a tendency to low spirits this evening, and a wish to withdraw early. But the old lady did not approve of people "shirking" (as boys say) either their duties or their pleasures; and to keep "a merry Christmas" in a family circle that had been spared to meet in health and happiness, seemed to her to be both the one and the other.

It was his sermon for next day which weighed on the parson's mind. Not that he was behindhand with that part of his duties. He was far too methodical in his habits for that, and it had been written before the bustle of Christmas week began. But after preaching Christmas sermons from the same pulpit for thirty-five years, he felt keenly how difficult it is to awaken due interest in subjects that are so familiar, and to give new force to lessons so often repeated. So he wanted a quiet hour in his own study before he went to rest, with the sermon that did not satisfy him, and the subject that should be so heart-stirring and ever new,—the Story of Bethlehem.

He consented, however, to pull one cracker with the grandmother, though he feared the noise might startle her nerves, and said so.

"Nerves were not invented in my young days," said the old lady, firmly; and she took her part in the ensuing explosion without so much as a wink.

As the crackers snapped, it seemed to the parson as if the fragrant smoke from the yule log were growing denser in the room. Through the mist from time to time the face of the tutor loomed large and then disappeared. At last the clouds rolled away, and the parson breathed clear air. Clear, yes, and how clear! This brilliant freshness, these intense lights and shadows, this mildness and purity in the night air—

"It is not England," he muttered; "it is the East. I have felt no air like this since I breathed the air of Palestine."

Over his head, through immeasurable distances, the dark-blue space was lighted by the great multitude of the stars, whose glittering ranks



have in that atmosphere a distinctness and a glory unseen with us. Perhaps no scene of beauty in the visible creation has proved a more

hackneyed theme for the poet and the philosopher than a starry night. But not all the superabundance of simile and moral illustration with which the subject has been loaded can rob the beholder of the freshness of its grandeur or the force of its teaching; that noblest and most majestic vision of the handiwork of God on which the eye of man is here permitted to rest.

As the parson gazed he became conscious that he was not alone. Other eyes besides his were watching the skies to-night. Dark, profound, patient, eastern eyes, used from the cradle to the grave to watch and wait. The eyes of star-gazers and dream-interpreters; men who believed the fate of empires to be written in shining characters on the face of heaven, as the "Mene, Mene," was written in fire on the walls of the Babylonian palace. The old parson was one of the many men of real learning and wide reading who pursue their studies in the quiet country parishes of England, and it was with the keen interest of intelligence that he watched the group of figures that lay near him.

"Is this a vision of the past?" he asked himself. "There can be no doubt as to these men. They are star-gazers, magi, and, from their dress and bearing, men of high rank; perhaps 'teachers of a higher wisdom' in one of the purest philosophies of the old heathen world. When one thinks," he pursued, "of the intense interest, the eager excitement which the student of history finds in the narrative of the past as unfolded in dusty records written by the hand of man, one may realize how absorbing must have been that science which professed to unveil the future, and to display to the eyes of the wise the fate of dynasties written with the finger of God among the stars."

The dark-robed figures were so still that they might almost have been carved in stone. The air seemed to grow purer and purer; the stars shone brighter and brighter; suspended in ether the planets seemed to hang like lamps. Now a shooting meteor passed athwart the sky, and vanished behind the hill. But not for this did the watchers move; in silence they watched on—till, on a sudden, how and whence the parson knew not, across the shining ranks of that immeasurable host, whose names and number are known to God alone, there passed in slow but obvious motion one brilliant solitary star—a star of such surpassing brightness that he involuntarily joined in the wild cry of joy and greeting with which the men of the East now prostrated themselves with their faces to the earth.

He could not understand the language in which, with noisy clamour and gesticulation, they broke their former profound and patient silence, and greeted the portent for which they had watched. But he knew now that these were the wise men of the Epiphany, and that this was the Star of Bethlehem. In his ears rang the energetic simplicity of the gospel narrative, "When they saw the Star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy."

With exceeding great joy! Ah! happy magi, who (more blest than Balaam the son of Beor), were faithful to the dim' light vouchsafed to you; the Gentile church may well be proud of your memory. Ye travelled long and far to bring royal offerings to the King of the Jews, with a faith not found in Israel. Ye saw him whom prophets and kings had desired to see, and were glad. Wise men indeed, and wise with the highest wisdom, in that ye suffered yourselves to be taught of God.

Then the parson prayed that if this were indeed a dream he might dream on; might pass, if only in a vision, over the hill, following the footsteps of the magi, whilst the Star went before them, till he should see it rest above that city, which, little indeed among the thousands of Judah, was yet the birthplace of the Lord's Christ.

"Ah!" he almost sobbed, "let me follow! On my knees let me follow into the house and see the Holy Child. In the eyes of how many babies I have seen mind and thought far beyond their powers of communication, every mother knows. But if at times, with a sort of awe, one sees the immortal soul shining through the prison-bars of helpless infancy, what, oh! what must it be to behold the Godhead veiled in flesh through the face of a little child!"

The parson stretched out his arms, but even with the passion of his words the vision began to break. He dared not move for fear it should utterly fade, and as he lay still and silent, the wise men roused their followers, and led by the Star, the train passed solemnly over the distant hills.

Then the clear night became clouded with fragrant vapour, and with a sigh the parson awoke.

* * * * * *

When the cracker snapped and the white end was left in the grandmother's hand, she was astonished to perceive (as she thought) that the white lace veil which she had worn over her wedding bonnet was still in her possession, and that she was turning it over in her fingers. "I

fancied I gave it to Jemima when her first baby was born," she muttered dreamily. It was darned and yellow, but it carried her back all the same, and recalled happy hours with wonderful vividness. She remembered the post-chaise and the postilion. "He was such a pert little fellow, and how we laughed at him! He must be either dead or a very shaky old man by now," said the old lady. She seemed to smell the scent of meadow-sweet that was so powerful in a lane through which they drove; and how clearly she could see the clean little country inn where they spent the honeymoon! She seemed to be there now, taking off her bonnet and shawl, in the quaint clean chamber, with the heavy oak rafters, and the jasmine coming in at the window, and glancing with pardonable pride at the fair face reflected in the mirror. But as she laid her things on the patchwork coverlet, it seemed to her that the lace veil became fine white linen, and was folded about a figure that lay in the bed; and when she looked round the room again everything was draped in white—white blinds hung before the windows, and even the old oak chest and the press were covered with clean white cloths, after the decent custom of the country; whilst from the church tower without the passing bell tolled slowly. She had not seen the face of the corpse, and a strange anxiety came over her to count the strokes of the bell, which tell if it is a man, woman, or child who has passed away. One, two, three, four, five, six, seven! No more. It was a woman, and when she looked on the face of the dead she saw her own. But even as she looked the fair linen of the grave clothes became the buoyant drapery of another figure, in whose face she found a strange recognition of the lineaments of the dead with all the loveliness of the bride. But ah! more, much more! On that face there was a beauty not doomed to wither, before those happy eyes lay a future unshadowed by the imperfections of earthly prospects, and the folds of that robe were white as no fuller on earth can white them. The window curtain parted, the jasmine flowers bowed their heads, the spirit passed from the chamber of death, and the old lady's dream was ended.

* * * * *

Miss Letitia had shared a cracker with the widow. The widow squeaked when the cracker went off, and then insisted upon giving up the smart paper and everything to Miss Letitia. She had always given up everything to Mr. Jones, she did so now to Master MacGreedy,

and was quite unaccustomed to keep anything for her own share. She did not give this explanation herself, but so it was.

The cracker that thus fell into the hands of Miss Letitia was one of those new-fashioned ones that have a paper pattern of some article of dress wrapped up in them instead of a bonbon. This one was a paper bonnet made in the latest *mode*—of green tissue paper; and Miss Letitia stuck it on the top of her chignon with an air that the widow envied from the bottom of her heart. She had not the gift of “carrying off” her clothes. But to the tutor, on the contrary, it seemed to afford the most extreme amusement; and as Miss Letitia bowed gracefully hither and thither in the energy of her conversation with the widow, the green paper fluttering with each emphasis, he fairly shook with delight, his shadow dancing like a maniac beside him. He had scattered some more powder on the coals, and it may have been that the smoke got into her eyes, and confused her ideas of colour, but Miss Letitia was struck with a fervid and otherwise unaccountable admiration for the paper ends of the cracker, which were most unusually ugly. One was of a sallowish salmon colour, and transparent, the other was of brick-red paper with a fringe. As Miss Letitia turned them over, she saw, to her unspeakable delight, that there were several yards of each material, and her peculiar genius instantly seized upon the fact that in the present rage for double skirts there might be enough of the two kinds to combine into a fashionable dress.

It had never struck her before that a dirty salmon went well with brick red. “They blend so becomingly, my dear,” she murmured; “and I think the under skirt will set well, it is so stiff.”

The widow did not reply. The fumes of the tutor’s compound made her sleepy, and though she nodded to Miss Letitia’s observations, it was less from appreciation of their force than from inability to hold up her head. She was dreaming uneasy, horrible dreams, like nightmares; in which from time to time there mingled expressions of doubt and dissatisfaction which fell from Miss Letitia’s lips. “Just half a yard short—no gores—false hem—(and the melancholy reflection that) flounces take so much stuff.” Then the tutor’s face kept appearing and vanishing with horrible grimaces through the mist. At last the widow fell fairly asleep, and dreamed that she was married to the Blue Beard of nursery annals, and that on his return from his memorable journey he had caught her in the act of displaying the

mysterious cupboard to Miss Letitia. As he waved his scimitar over her head, he seemed unaccountably to assume the form and features of the tutor. In her agitation the poor woman could think of no plea against his severity, except that the cupboard was already crammed with the corpses of his previous wives, and that there was no room for her. She was pleading this argument when Miss Letitia's voice broke in upon her dream with decisive accent:

“There's enough for two bodies.”

The widow shrieked and awoke.

“High and low,” explained Miss Letitia. “My dear, what *are* you screaming about?”

“I am very sorry indeed,” said the widow; “I beg your pardon, I'm sure, a thousand times. But since Mr. Jones's death I have been so nervous, and I had such a horrible dream. And, oh dear! oh dear!” she added, “what is the matter with my precious child? Macready, love, come to your mamma, my pretty lamb.”

Ugh! ugh! There were groans from the corner where Master MacGreedy sat on his crackers as if they were eggs, and he hatching them. He had only touched one, as yet, of the stock he had secured. He had picked it to pieces, had avoided the snap, and had found a large comfit like an egg with a rough shell, inside. Every one knows that the goodies in crackers are not of a very superior quality. There is a large amount of white lead in the outside thinly disguised by a shabby flavour of sugar. But that outside once disposed of, there lies an almond at the core. Now an almond is a very delicious thing in itself, and doubly nice when it takes the taste of white paint and chalk out of one's mouth. But in spite of all the white lead and sugar and chalk through which he had sucked his way, MacGreedy could not come to the almond. A dozen times had he been on the point of spitting out the delusive sweetmeat; but just as he thought of it he was sure to feel a bit of hard rough edge, and thinking he had gained the kernel at last, he held valiantly on. It only proved to be a rough bit of sugar, however, and still the interminable coating melted copiously in his mouth; and still the clean, fragrant almond evaded his hopes. At last with a groan he spat the seemingly undiminished bonbon on to the floor, and turned as white and trembling as an arrowroot blancmange.

In obedience to the widow's entreaties the tutor opened a window, and tried to carry MacGreedy to the air; but that young gentleman

utterly refused to allow the tutor to approach him, and was borne howling to bed by his mamma.

With the fresh air the fumes of the fragrant smoke dispersed, and the company roused themselves.

"Rather oppressive, eh?" said the master of the house, who had had his dream too, with which we have no concern.

The dogs had had theirs also, and had testified to the same in their sleep by low growls and whines. Now they shook themselves, and rubbed against each other, growling in a warlike manner through their teeth, and wagging peaceably with their little stumpy tails.

The twins shook themselves and fell to squabbling as to whether they had been to sleep or no; and, if either, which of them had given way to that weakness.

Miss Letitia took the paper bonnet from her head with a nervous laugh, and after looking regretfully at the cracker papers put them in her pocket.

The parson went home through the frosty night. In the village street he heard a boy's voice singing two lines of the Christmas hymn—

"Trace we the Babe Who hath redeemed our loss
From the poor Manger to the bitter Cross;"

and his eyes filled with tears.

The old lady went to bed and slept in peace.

"In all the thirty-five years we have been privileged to hear you, sir," she told the rector next day after service, "I never heard such a Christmas sermon before."

The visitor carefully preserved the blue paper and the cracker motto. He came down early next morning to find the white half to put with them. He did not find it, for the young lady had taken it the night before.

The tutor had been in the room, before him, wandering round the scene of the evening's festivities.

The yule log lay black and cold upon the hearth, and the tutor nodded to it. "I told you how it would be," he said; "but never mind, you have had your day, and a merry one too." In the corner lay the heap of crackers which Master Mac Greedy had been too ill to remember when he retired. The tutor pocketed them with a grim smile.

As to the comfit, it was eaten by one of the dogs, who had come down earliest of all. He swallowed it whole, so whether it contained an almond or not, remains a mystery to the present time. J. H. E.

THE LITTLE FLOWER GIRL.

A TALE OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION.

CHAPTER I.

EARLY one morning, in the month of July in the year 1794, at which time France was suffering from the many disasters of the Revolution and the murder of her king, Louis XVI., a cart loaded with hay was passing slowly along the road between the towns of Thouars and Nantes. A carter reposed lazily on the top of the sweet-smelling hay. On approaching a thickly-covered heath or common, the man's attention was caught by marks of blood, and the appearance of the turf being much and recently trodden. He jumped from the cart, and on advancing a few steps he saw what seemed to be part of a lady's silk dress. On approaching this object, which was partially concealed by a thicket of brambles and gorse, he discovered stretched on the ground the body of a lady, who had apparently been recently murdered. Near her lay two children, one a little boy of about three years old, and a little girl somewhat older. The children slept by their dead mother, for a while unconscious of their loss, as well as of the scene which must have preceded it. Having satisfied himself that life was extinct, the carter turned to examine the sleeping children, the style and richness of whose dress told plainly that they belonged to the higher class—that class which was at that period the special object of the hatred and fury of the misguided people, who made a boast of murdering and plundering all who ranked amongst the aristocracy of that unhappy country.

After contemplating the children for a short time as if uncertain how to act, the peasant exclaimed aloud—"Well! I can't leave these poor little creatures here to perish."

Scenes of horror were too common in those days for the man to do more than cast a look of pity on the lifeless body before him, but he quickly raised the children and placed them gently on the soft hay of his cart; then giving a sharp crack of his long whip, the horse proceeded on the way. The noise of the whip and the motion of the cart

aroused the children. On awakening they looked first at each other, then on the strange bed on which they found themselves lying, then at the cart and the carter, whose rough appearance was certainly not calculated to reassure them—a quantity of red hair, as well as beard and moustache, gave him a somewhat forbidding appearance. The poor children, bewildered and terrified, burst into tears, exclaiming in piteous accents, “Mamma, Mamma, where are you? Mamma, come to us!”

“Hold your tongues,” said the carter, somewhat sharply, “your mamma is gone—by my faith! I don’t quite know where she is gone—but she may come back by-and-by, but not if you make that noise; so be quiet and I will give you something to eat, for I should think you must be hungry.” The children, frightened by the peasant’s look and manner, were now silent, and he proceeded to unfasten a basket hung on to an iron bar of the cart, from which he took a piece of coarse, black bread such as served for the common food of the peasants of these parts, and offered a piece to each of the children. The little girl, unaccustomed to such food, looked at it without attempting to take it. “It’s all I have to give you,” said the man, “and you had better eat it than die of hunger.” As he still held it to the child, she noticed that her frock was spotted with blood, which looked fresh and wet, whilst other marks of the same kind were dry and brown.

“Are you hurt?” said he kindly, as he pointed to the marks; “where does this come from?”

The child uncovered her arm, and on her doing so, the man saw two cuts, one of which appeared somewhat deep. He quickly undid his neckcloth, and tenderly and gently wiped away the blood, and then bound up the soft white arm with his rough fingers, so as to stop the bleeding. This little operation won the child’s confidence, and, raising her dark-blue eyes to his face, she said, “Then you are not a robber?”

“I hope not,” replied the peasant, smiling.

“And you will not kill me nor little Claude?”

“No, no, my poor child,” said he, kindly; “and now that you are not frightened at me, tell me what had happened to you when I found you.”

“Some frightful men attacked us with great swords; they had such big, black beards—they hit me here on my arm, and then I don’t know

what they did. They frightened me so that I shut my eyes; then I heard mamma scream, and I can't recollect anything more."

The carter now seated himself by the child, putting his arm round her as if to protect her from the rough jolting of the cart. "May we not go back and look for mamma?" added the child, unconscious of her fate.

"Yes, yes, but not now—besides, you must eat something first." As if encouraged by these words, the poor little girl began to eat, as well as she could, the hard, dry bread, at the same time offering a piece to her brother. The little fellow refused it, the tears again running down his face.

"You must not cry, Claude," said his sister, "or this man will be angry with us, and won't let us look for mamma."

"I want to go to mamma—where is she, Malie?" said the poor child.

"Is your name Malie? it is a queer one."

"No, no," replied she, laughing as she repeated the name, "it's only little Claude who calls me so because he can't speak plain: he's only three years old, but I'm five; I'm called Marie, after the Holy Virgin."

"Well then, Ma'mselle Marie," said the peasant, good-humouredly, "can you tell me something more about what happened to you?"

The little girl waited till she had eaten her last mouthful of the hard bread, then drawing her little brother closer to her and laying his fair curly head on her lap, she said as she kissed him, "Now, Claude, darling, go to sleep, I will take care of you. There, that's it," she added, as the little fellow did as she bid him; then turning to her rough but kind conductor she said, "I can't recollect much, only I know that yesterday, when it was very late, mamma took us to walk with her on the road to Nantes. She seemed to be watching for some one, for once or twice she said sorrowfully, 'Alas! I don't see him—oh! I wish I could warn him;' and when I said, 'Who, mamma?' she did not answer, and did not seem to hear me. Then little Claude was very tired, and mamma took him up in her arms, and he fell asleep. I too was so tired I could hardly walk, but still mamma went on. Then suddenly, when it was nearly dark, those dreadful men came. They struck mamma; she said, 'Oh, do not hurt my children!' I said, 'Don't hurt mamma.' Then one of them hit me with his sword here, on my arm; then I fell down and went to sleep, so that I can't re-

member anything more ; and now I want to find mamma—do let us look for mamma !” added the child, as her eyes again filled with tears.

“ Well, well, well,” replied the carter, scarcely suppressing the emotion he felt at the child’s sad tale, “ we won’t talk any more now ; your brother is asleep and you must try and sleep too.” So saying, he jumped from the cart, and, lighting his pipe, pursued his way on foot and in silence, only occasionally urging on his horse.

CHAPTER II.

THE little party soon reached Nantes, a town on the Loire, rendered celebrated by the horrors perpetrated there during the Revolution. A man, or rather monster, of the name of Carrier, was deputed by the National Convention to wreak their vengeance on the unhappy people of Nantes, amongst whom were a considerable number of Vendees. The people of La Vendée long stood out for the royal authority, and were only compelled after a fruitless resistance to submit to the new government. Fifteen thousand persons perished in Nantes in the short space of one month, and the total number of victims is believed to have exceeded thirty thousand in that town during the Reign of Terror.

As our little party entered Nantes, the carter observed groups of men and women stopping to read bills posted on the walls. He easily conjectured from the looks and manner of those so occupied, no less than by their gloomy silence, that fresh atrocities were threatened by Carrier, who was then exercising his wicked power in the unhappy town.

“ Whose children are those that you have in your cart ?” inquired a gendarme* of the carter.

“ Mine,” replied the peasant.

“ You lie,” returned the other ; “ these children are richly dressed, and it’s plain that you are but a peasant. I shall denounce you to the Convention to teach you to speak the truth.”

“ By my faith,” said the carter, terrified by this threat, “ I meant when I said *mine* that I found them, and that, therefore, they belong to me—I can’t tell who else they belong to.”

“ Have you read the notice which you may see there ?” inquired the

* A police soldier.

gendarme, as he pointed to one of the bills on a wall near to where they were standing.

"That would be rather difficult, citizen," replied the carter, "as I don't know a letter."

"Well then, friend, I will tell you that Carrier, having got rid, in one way or another, of numbers of the hateful aristocrats, the republic is troubled with more children than they know what to do with, and it is decreed that they shall be got rid of like their parents. The Loire will soon rid us of them, but Carrier, by way of a bit of clemency, has given notice that any citizen wishing to take any of these children may do so on giving his name and address."

This condition seemed to alarm the carter, and fears for his own safety probably prevented his showing further inclination to befriend the poor children he had so far protected. Following the gendarme, he therefore conducted Marie and her brother to an appointed place in the town, then turned away without daring to show the sorrow he felt on leaving the two poor little children amongst many others to their probable fate. Finding herself deserted by the only one to whom she looked for help and protection, Marie would have abandoned herself to the terror and sorrow which took possession of her, but she felt her poor little brother clinging trembling to her, his face raised appealingly to hers. Young as she was she forgot her own fears in her anxiety to comfort the little fellow who looked to her for help. Looking around Marie now perceived that the large open space or square was crowded with children of all ages, who, by their dress and general appearance, were plainly of the same class as herself. Many as young as herself and Claude were crying bitterly, vainly calling on those who could never again reply to them. Some who were older wept silently, better aware of the terrible fate that awaited them, and of the hopelessness of their position.

Marie seated herself on the ground, and, drawing Claude to her, she put her arm round him and endeavoured to soothe him with kisses and caresses. When she had somewhat quieted the poor child she was able to notice what was passing around her, and her attention was attracted by several women who were going about amongst the groups of children, stopping to examine them, their dress and appearance; now and then she saw one of these women take a child in her arms and leave the place with it. Marie not only watched, but

listened to what was going on near her; a deadly paleness overspread her young and sweet face as she presently gathered from the conversation of some of these women, that all the children not rescued by them were to be ruthlessly drowned in the Loire. Child as she was, she now understood the fate that awaited her and her innocent brother. She knew not where to look for help, but with a child's simple faith she murmured: "Holy Virgin, save me and my little brother!"

At that moment a woman with a basket well filled with fruit came close to where Marie was seated: the child timidly called to her; the woman turned, and her face assumed a look of pity as she observed two such young and helpless ones left apparently alone in the world. As she drew towards them, Marie ventured to ask, the tears starting to her eyes, "Is it true that we are to be thrown into the river?"

"Alas, my poor child!" exclaimed the woman, looking cautiously around.

"Oh! then," said Marie, clasping her small hands, and raising her face, bathed in tears, to the fruit woman, "save my little brother; take poor little Claude."

"And why should I take him instead of you?" asked the woman, whose heart was touched by this mark of childish love.

"Because Claude is papa's favourite, besides I could not bear to see him die. No, no, pray, pray save my brother. Claude," added she, "you will go with this good woman."

"No, I won't leave 'ou, Malie."

"But they will throw me into the water, Claude," replied Marie, now crying bitterly.

"Well, then," said the child, clinging to her, "I will be thrown in with 'ou."

"But then I shall die," said Marie.

"Then I'll die with 'ou," persisted the little fellow.

"I wish I could save you both," said the fruit woman, as she wiped away a tear, "but I can only take one."

"Then take Claude," said Marie, unhesitatingly.

The child's courageous devotion only tended to confirm the woman in her desire to rescue her, and she attempted to take her hand as if for the purpose of leading her away. Marie shrank from her, and, clasping Claude tightly in her arms, she impetuously exclaimed: "Save my brother, or let us die together."

Such resolution and devotion in one of such tender years drew tears from the good woman's eyes; she seemed to hesitate in her purpose, and to forget for a while the difficulty she had in maintaining herself and an old blind mother; she only now thought of saving from a terrible death the two children who besought her pity.

"I will go and ask leave to take you both; I daresay they won't refuse," said the good woman, whose tears were now falling fast; "I shall come back soon, so do not stir from this place, or else I might not be able to find you." So saying, she put some of the fruit from her basket on Marie's lap, and then hastened away. The poor child thankfully received the nice fresh fruit, having tasted nothing for so many hours but the coarse dry bread she had eaten so unwillingly. An hour passed away; another hour, and still the woman came not. With the hopefulness and confidence of childhood, Marie continued to watch for her reappearance, trying to beguile the time by alternately soothing and amusing her poor little companion. In this way she struggled against the weariness and fatigue she felt; she had now been many hours without rest, and suffered much from the pain of the wounds in her arm. Little used to hardship of any kind, the trial was great for one of such tender years, and poor little Marie's powers of endurance were fast giving way; a feeling of drowsiness came over her, and she would gladly have laid down even on the hard ground and slept but for her little brother, and the fear of what might happen to him. Feeling at last that she could no longer keep awake, she said: "Claude, you must not go away; you must keep close by me." The little fellow drew closer to her.

"Listen to me, Claude," said Marie; "if I go to sleep and any one tries to take you away, you must try and remember your name, so that I may find you again."

"I called Claude," said the child, confidently.

"No, no, say after me, Claude de Beaurepaire."

"Beau-paire," said he.

"Beau-re-paire," again repeated his sister.

"Paire," said little Claude.

Ere Marie closed her eyes, she again repeated, "Beau-re-paire."

(To be continued.)

There seemed to be now no protection left for Rome, and the panic in the city was very great. The only armies which might have kept the enemy from advancing on Rome were defeated and dispersed, and the Carthaginians seemed to have Italy at their mercy.

And now the winter came on, during which it was necessary for both sides to suspend fighting, in consequence of the weather. Each were occupied in strengthening themselves for the struggle in the spring.

(To be continued.)

THE TOUR OF THE BUNNIEWINKS—*continued.*

HE next morning there was a thick mist, which annoyed Mr. Bunnewink dreadfully, because he meant to have gone that day to see the Cheesewring and the Hurlers, and the waiter told him, "if he went in a mist he would see nothing, and would probably be lost in a pixy bed" (bog). Mr. Bunnewink was so cross with the Cornish weather that he would not eat any fried potatoes and bacon for breakfast, because it was a Cornish dish, and had cold boiled mutton instead. As Mr. Bunnewink was cross, Mrs. Bunnewink shut herself up in her own room, and put her boxes tidy, and was comforted.

But Zummy and Drummie were dreadfully dull; so to amuse themselves they went in the omnibus to meet every train, and as three up, and three down trains came in every day between eight a.m. and eight p.m., they had twelve drives to and from the station, and they never paid for one of them, but told the 'bus man that their papa was staying at the inn and would pay him.

In the evening the mist cleared a little, and Mr. Bunnewink put on his goloshes, and his macintosh, and his comforter, and was going out for a turn by moonlight when the omnibus conductor came and asked him for twelve shillings for the young lady and gentleman's twelve drives to and from the station.

Mr. Bunnewink got into a dreadful rage. He scolded the conductor for conducting Zummy and Drummie, the driver for driving them, Mrs. Bunnewink for not keeping them in, and the master of the inn for letting them out, and Zummy and Drummie for going at all, and everybody tried not to laugh while Mr. Bunnewink scolded,

except Mrs. Bunniewink and the children. She trembled, and they cried. When Mr. Bunniewink had finished scolding, he sent Zummy and Drummie to bed without any supper, and sent the twelve shillings to the 'bus man by the waiter.

There was a mist again the next morning, and the waiter told Mr. Bunniewink that mists often lasted three days. He looked horribly cross, and as soon as ever he had finished breakfast he went out, and bought some lesson-books, and made Zummy and Drummie do lessons all day—"to keep them out of mischief and omnibuses." They did not enjoy the lessons. However, the mist cleared that evening, and the next day was lovely, and they all started in a fly for the well of St. Kayne, which is a very remarkable well indeed.

If the husband drinks first of its waters, he will rule his wife perpetually (as is right), but if the wife drinks first she will rule her husband. And they say, once on a time, a couple were married in St. Kayne Church, who were so anxious about this, that the moment the ceremony was over, he rushed off to the well to drink the charmed water, leaving his bride in the church, but she quietly took a bottleful from her pocket, and drank it off then and there. So, as the Cornish folks would say, *She was master* ever after.

The road between Liskeard and St. Kayne was very bad, and Mrs. Bunniewink was so much alarmed that she made Mr. Bunniewink, Zummy, and Drummie, all three sit with their backs to the horses, while she had the front seat to herself; but she did not sit on it, she caught hold of the loops on either side, and swung herself from side to side, according to the joltings of the carriage: her face became very red in consequence. But sitting backwards made Mr. Bunniewink feel so ill that he determined never again to yield to his wife in anything whatever; and no sooner was he out of the fly than he rushed off to the well to make sure of being the first to taste its magic waters.

But in his hurry and bustle he caught his foot in a stone, and fell headlong into the pretty little well, and when he was in he was so fat that he could not get himself out. Zummy and Drummie had followed their papa as fast as they could, but when they saw him stuck in the arch of the well they were frightened. Drummie immediately caught hold of his right foot to pull him out backwards, but the boot came off in her hand. Zummy ran back at once to the fly to tell his mamma that his "papa was drowned."

Mrs. Bunniewink flew to the spot, and when she got there, she fell weeping on the bank and crying out—"Oh, my Bunnie, Bunnie, Bunniewink! oh my Bun!"

By this time a man had come up, who helped Mr. Bunniewink out of the well, none the worse for his fall; but he had swallowed such an enormous lot of water that he felt sure Mrs. Bunniewink would never even venture to contradict him again. They now got their luncheon out of the fly and ate it by the roadside, and returned to Liskeard very pleasantly in the heat of the afternoon.

They all went to bed and went to sleep, but in the middle of the night Mr. Bunniewink awoke, and remembered that he meant to have gone to the Cheesewring the day before, and they had gone to St. Kayne instead. So he tried to wake his wife.

"Maria!" she snored; "Maria!" she snored a little louder; then he gave her a little push—"Mrs. Bunniewink!" and she started up immediately screaming out, "Thieves! fire! murder!" as loud as possible; but she would not open her eyes, for fear of seeing the thieves or the fire or the murderer.

Mrs. Bunniewink kept on screaming and Mr. Bunniewink kept on saying "hush," until all the chambermaids, headed by the master and mistress, and followed by boots, came to know what was the matter. But Mrs. Bunniewink kept on screaming until she was so tired she fell asleep, because she could not keep awake any longer. The very first thing the next morning Mr. Bunniewink ordered a fly for the Cheesewring, and they started immediately after an early breakfast. As this was to be the last expedition in the tour, Mr. Bunniewink determined to make it a long one. After some time they stopped on the moor, and the driver got down and opened the carriage door. Mr. Bunniewink began to look angry, and asked why he stopped in that manner.

The driver touched his hat and said, "The Hurlers, sir."

"What Hurlers?" said Mr. Bunniewink.

"What Hurlers, sir? why the Hurlers, sir—those young men who would play to hurling on Sunday, and were turned to stone as they played." And he pointed across the moor to some granite posts standing up against the sky on the open moor.

Then Mr. Bunniewink determined to go and look at the wonderful Hurlers, so they walked across the soft turf to the stones, which ever so

many years ago, one fine Sunday morning had been strong young men, and who, forgetting whose day it was, had in the midst of their sin been suddenly turned to stone. Some were standing upright and some



lying on the ground. They were glad soon to get away from this desolate spot.

Mr. Bunniewink would not let the driver rest his horses at the

Cheesewring Hotel, because he would not be seen at a public-house; so they went on to Phoenix or Clinicum mine, where the captain, who lived in a house in the midst of the mine, kindly let them put up the horses while they went to see the Cheesewring and granite works.

Mr. Bunniewink gave Mrs. Bunniewink his arm, and desired Zummy and Drummie to take one another's hands, and so they started. Just as they were going to cross the tramway from the granite works to Moorswater, two trucks heavily laden with great blocks of granite came down the incline at a great rate, and if they had been on the line they must have been run over. Mrs. Bunniewink screamed, and Mr. Bunniewink began to scold the place—and the truck, and the tramway, and everything; but as there were only Zummy and Drummie to listen, Mr. and Mrs. Bunniewink soon left off screaming and scolding and began to climb towards the Cheesewring; and they found they could not do it arm-in-arm, the hill was so steep and there were so many granite rocks, large and small, scattered about. They struggled on, and got very hot, and seemed no nearer; at last they met a man and asked the way; and he "reckoned they were strangers," and undertook to show them the road. And on the way he took them to Daniel Gumb's house. Daniel Gumb was a very remarkable man, who lived about one hundred years ago, who had a great many sons and daughters, and who did not like paying rent, rates, and taxes, so he went with his wife and family and made a kind of dwelling among the rocks, and cut out geometrical figures on the flat big stones, and studied the stars, and so lived until he died. His descendants live in common houses like other folk, and Daniel Gumb's house is a lion.

After this they came to the Wring, a low wall of stones, mostly of a size a man can carry, built firmly up without mortar, round the top of the tor, or hill, and a little way down from the top is the wonderful pile of rocks called the Cheesewring—the smallest stone at the bottom, and each stone growing bigger till you come to the biggest of all at the top, and yet all so steady that it has stood the storms of centuries. They looked, too, at the other great rocks scattered around, some with little basins hollowed out on them, said to have been used by the Druids to hold the blood of their sacrifices.

They looked, too, at the country round, all across the county, from Lundy Island, on the north, to Plymouth Sound on the south, and Dartmoor looking blue in the hazy distance; and beneath them were

valleys and corn-fields ; and nestling among their trees in the valleys were the granite church towers, every stone of which must have been carried miles and miles by loving hands, from the hills where the old Druids worshipped their false gods, to build fair temples for the Lord. And well would it be if, for every church they saw, three more could be built.

When the Bunnewinks had looked at the stones and the view, they went on to the granite quarries, and were astonished at the big blocks of stone, and the big stones used to move them. And Mr. Bunnewink refused to believe that stone was sent thence to Ceylon and Copenhagen. While he was arguing about this with the man who had sent off the stones, suddenly everybody began to run away as fast as they could.

Mr. Bunnewink would keep on talking, till the man he was talking to caught hold of him and made him run for "dear life," and pulled and dragged him up the hill to the place where Mrs. Bunnewink, Zummy, and Drummie had been conducted by their guide. Poor Mr. Bunnewink was out of breath with rage and running, but he had scarcely stopped when there was a report equal to three claps of thunder, and the ground almost shook under their feet. Then he found they were blasting off a large block of stone with gunpowder, and as the pieces flew about in every direction he might very likely have been killed by some bit falling on his head had he been allowed to stay in the quarry.

As soon as they had recovered the shock of the blasting, they made their way back to the mine, and immediately ordered the fly to be got ready while they saw the mine ; but as it takes longer to see a mine than to put two horses into a carriage they kept it waiting a long while.

They first saw the copper ore, which looked only like mud and stones, brought up from the mine in kibbles or iron buckets ; one coming up as the other goes down, and worked by engines, which always have a man attending on them, and live in houses, and are kept as hot and bright as possible, do all their work by steam, and are always called "she," and spoken of in an affectionate manner ; and they really do seem almost alive. They saw the Bal girls breaking up the pieces of ore, small enough for the stamps. They saw the stamps stamp it to a sparkling black powder ready for smelting, and they saw the bright-green arsenic works.

Then they started for Launceston, and Mrs. Bunniewink was so much frightened by the hills that she screamed the whole way, until they reached a farm called Darley, where they stopped to see an oak-tree one thousand years old, and so large that a party can drink tea inside it. But as soon as she was in the fly again she began screaming again, until, as usual, she screamed herself to sleep.

They were glad to reach Launceston after a very long drive, and Zummy and Drummie much admired the graceful white hart which always sits over the door of the principal inn and gives it its name.

Mr. Bunniewink would hardly wait for them to have some tea before he hurried them off to see the church and the castle: for he had determined to reach London again the next evening, and to be delayed by no further sight-seeing or expeditions after seven o'clock that evening. He got into a great rage when the master of the inn suggested to him that Werrington Park, Trebartha, and Cartha Martha were all well worth visiting. He said "No; Launceston was the limit of his tour, and neither landscape nor friendship should tempt him to change his plans." And so they missed some of the loveliest scenery in Cornwall.

Zummy and Drummie enjoyed the castle very much. It was delightful running up the flights of steps to reach the remains of the old Roman keep; but they were disappointed that Mrs. Bunniewink would not let them climb the little staircase within the ruined walls. They also saw three old gateways, one at each entrance to the castle green, and one in the town.

Then they went to see the church, and were delighted with the outside; which was grey granite again, and every stone carved—tall beautiful ferns on either side the windows, and under the east window a figure of St. Mary Magdalene, to whom the church is dedicated. And the inside was looking pretty too, with the beautiful harvest festival decorations.

It was now a quarter to seven, so Mr. Bunniewink made them return to the inn: as seven was the latest hour at which he intended to look at anything in Cornwall, he wished to be in the inn before that hour struck. However, Zummy and Drummie had much pleasure in seeing the little men on the market-house clock (which was just opposite their sitting-room window) strike the hour with their hammers on the clock when seven o'clock came. Mr. and Mrs.

Bunniewink now had dinner, and Zummy and Drummie supper, but they all ate roast chicken and apple tart.

The next morning they started for home by the express train, and no sooner were they settled in the railway carriage than Mr. Bunniewink drew down all the blinds, and declared they must remain down all the way to London; for the tour was ended, the sights were seen, and they were going home. Zummy and Drummie found this very dull, so they consoled themselves by making boats and bicky boxes of the precious Guide-book, and they made one hundred boats and one hundred boxes between Launceston and Swindon, and then Mr. Bunniewink found them out, and scolded them all the way to Paddington, when everything was forgotten in the bustle of arriving.

They soon reached home in safety, in a cab, feeling that they had made a successful tour, and believing themselves to be very great travellers indeed.

R. A. E.

TALK UPON BOOKS.

 T this "dead" season of the year it is perhaps all the more refreshing to open a beautiful green book of country rambles, describing the sights and sounds of the more life-abounding months. "Country Walks of a Naturalist with his Children," by the Rev. W. Houghton, Rector of Preston on the Wild Moors, Shropshire (Groombridge & Sons, 5, Paternoster Row), is certainly a volume calculated to carry one's thoughts and hopes forwards out of dark December into sunshiny May, now; and when May comes what a charming companion it will prove to young people of intelligent and inquiring minds! To begin with, it is adorned with eight coloured illustrations, the frontispiece, a delicately-tinted landscape in which we see the naturalist papa sitting on a grassy bank explaining something to two elder children, while the third is amusing itself a little way off picking flowers on its own account. Other of the illustrations are copies reduced in size (by permission) of some

of the plates in Mr. Gould's justly called "magnificent" work on British birds. It is needless to add they are beautiful. And the book abounds in smaller wood-cuts besides.

As to the literature, papa does not aim at scientific instruction in any particular branch of natural history, but at giving his (and other) children a taste for it by furnishing correct and amusing information upon whatever strikes their attention in their different rambles. And we think he has carried out his object admirably and most entertainingly. We wish he would try an experiment upon the next batches of toad and frog tadpoles he meets with, and examine them through a moderate lens. We fancy he will find the *frog* tadpoles speckled with what looks like gold dust, but the *toad* ditto black all over. *Vide* page 47 of this very pretty among pretty books.

For reading children, still happy in the title of "the little ones," we cannot imagine a more charming present than "Daisy and Her Companions" (Bell and